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Facilitating the transition from high school to post-secondary education for students with learning disabilities: How are we doing?

Sandra Janiga

Facilitating the Transition from High School to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities: How are We Doing?

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Sandra Jeanne Janiga

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Approved: V. Costiuleadek
(committee chair)

Jennifer Lukomski
(committee member)

Dean: _____

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Abstract

Federal and New York State (NYS) legislation require that students with disabilities receive services that assist them in the transition from high school to post-secondary life. Students with learning disabilities (LD) who pursue post-secondary education have specific needs. Research shows that transition services must address the following issues: student understanding of his or her disability, student strengths and weaknesses, career decision-making skills, and how to deal with the increased demands of post-secondary education. This study assesses how well transition services are meeting these needs. Seventy-four coordinators of programs for students with disabilities at various NYS colleges completed surveys measuring their perception of how well the students they serve are prepared through transition services in high school. Respondents rated students' lack of advocacy skills as the greatest weakness of current transition services. Respondents were most satisfied with high schools' provision of updated evaluations for students prior to enrollment in college.

Facilitating the Transition from High School to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities: How are We Doing?

Since the passage of PL 94-142, the number of students identified with a learning disability and served in special programs has increased by 142% (Zigmond & Miller, 1992). Students with learning disabilities now constitute the largest portion of students identified with a disability in public schools, with over 2.4 million students receiving services under the category of learning disabilities in 1993-1994 (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Current legislation and best practice require that beginning by at least age 14, these students' post-secondary goals and outcomes be addressed. For many students with learning disabilities, continued education after graduation from high school is one goal. Over 130,000 students with diagnosed learning disabilities attend college in the United States and the number continues to increase (Matthews, Anderson, & Skolnick, 1987). With such a large number of students in our public schools receiving services for learning disabilities it is imperative that appropriate transition services be provided to aid students in the transition from high school to college.

This study assesses the state of transition services for students with disabilities who pursue post-secondary education in New York State from the viewpoint of service providers at institutes of higher learning. By developing an understanding of the issues and concerns of professionals at the post-secondary level, junior and senior high school staff can evaluate and improve the services they provide to students with learning disabilities who plan to pursue a college degree.

Definitions of Learning Disability

A brief review of current definitions of learning disabilities is necessary to understand the various ways learning disabilities can be manifested in any given student. Also, the definition of

what constitutes a learning disability varies from educational legislation used to implement services for students in public education, to civil rights legislation used in institutions of higher education. The methods used to determine a disability influence which students are eligible for services.

There are two prominent definitions of a learning disability. The most widely used definition is the one incorporated into the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). This definition is utilized by many states and defines a specific learning disability as

> a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicap, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. (IDEA Amendments of 1997, PL 105-17, § 1, 111Stat. 37 [1998]).

New York State's definition of a learning disability is similar to federal legislation, but also includes specific criteria to determine if a disability exists. According to Part 200, a "a student who exhibits a discrepancy of 50 percent or more between expected achievement and actual achievement determined on an individual basis shall be deemed to have a learning disability." This definition supports a discrepancy model of learning disabilities that is often used in the identification of students with a specific learning disability in public schools. When assessing the existence of a leaning disability, school officials generally use a discrepancy between the student's estimated ability level and their actual achievement level on standardized tests.

Another definition was developed by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), and defines learning disabilities as

> a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient/inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), it is not the result of those conditions or influences. (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994, pp.65-66)

This definition of learning disabilities has a broad base of support at the post-secondary level (Getzel & Gugerty, 1996). The NJCLD definition specifies that the disability exists throughout the lifespan, identifies the learning disability as the primary condition, and does not rule out the possibility that learning disabilities can exist in people with superior intellect.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was crafted to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and defines a disability as follows:

> The term disability means, with respect to an individual, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, PL 101-336, Section 3 (2) [42 U.S.C.A. 12101]).

The standard by which a person is determined to have a disability is a comparison with the "average abilities of most persons" (Gordon & Keiser, 1998). A student who was determined to have a learning disability using the discrepancy model (as used in New York State) may not qualify under the ADA definition. If his or her achievement is not significantly different from the average person, a disability is not evident under the ADA definition. This is true even though he or she may not be demonstrating his or her full potential because of learning difficulties (Gordon & Keiser, 1998).

It is clear that the different definitions of a learning disability can lead to a great deal of

confusion and difficulty in providing comprehensive services throughout the life span. Individuals with learning disabilities need to know and understand these definitions and their implications. An additional discussion of the differences between educational and civil rights legislation is provided in the following section.

Learning Disabilities in Higher Education

With the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112), which removed many of the barriers that prevented individuals with disabilities from pursuing post-secondary education, an increasing number of adults with disabilities have enrolled in college and other institutions of higher education (Brill, 1987). College students with learning disabilities comprise the greatest proportion of these students, with one study placing the percentage at 25% (Henderson, 1992). Matthews, Anderson, & Skolnick (1987) found that over 130,000 students with learning disabilities attend college in the United States, and this number continues to grow. Between 1978 and 1990, the incidence of learning disabilities in freshman college students has increased tenfold (McGuire, Norlander, & Shaw, 1990). Students with learning disabilities can attend post-secondary training and education through a number of options. Four year colleges and universities, junior or community colleges, and degree offering technical and business institutes are the focus of the current study.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (PL 101-336) are civil rights legislation designed to protect the rights of people with disabilities. For simplicity's sake, both of these Acts and the related litigation will be referred to simply as ADA throughout this section. Individuals who are part of the transition planning process for students with learning disabilities should understand the difference between the rights of students under IDEA and it's subsequent amendments and ADA.

IDEA and its amendments provide funding mandates for identification and provision of services to students with disabilities which facilitate successful learning (Gordon & Keiser, 1998). The goal of IDEA is to promote more positive outcomes for individuals. ADA only guarantees that individuals who are otherwise qualified for employment or educational programming (i.e., university enrollment) are not denied access simply because of their disability. While students with learning disabilities are in the public education system, their educational rights and accommodations are guaranteed under IDEA. Schools are mandated to identify and determine appropriate educational programming and accommodations. When these students enter post-secondary education, they are protected under ADA. Post-secondary institutions that receive federal funding are required to make *reasonable* accommodations to students. The responsibility of initiating the provision of these services fall to the student, not the institution (Pagels, 1998). (For a more thorough discussion of ADA and higher education see Gordon & Keiser, 1998). These regulations, which guide the provision of services to students with disabilities in post-secondary education, contribute to some of the specific needs of this population when they enter college. These and other needs that stem from the characteristics of students with learning disabilities need to be addressed when planning a student's transition.

Needs of Students at Post-Secondary Level

The following quote illustrates some of the thoughts and emotions experienced when students with learning disabilities decide to pursue post-secondary education.

> I want to succeed in college. I have a negative view of 'I can't do anything but work with my hands (vocational school).' In school I was told I could never go to college. A college degree would mean 'I would beat the system.' I would show 'them' I could. And I will know that I have help! Through taped books and tests, extended test time and spelling help,... I have a chance. In high school I was told I was retarded by my counselor (Smith, as cited in Gajar, 1992, p. 51).

Students with learning disabilities who have the ability to succeed in college programs face a

wide variety of challenges before they even enter post-secondary education. As is evident in the statement from this student with learning disabilities, college is often not considered an option for these students. School counselors and teachers encourage them to pursue a vocational track. Parents who are not informed of the options for their children may follow the advice of school personnel and not suggest post-secondary education for their child. Many students with learning disabilities have struggled through school and may also not consider themselves "smart enough" for college. These biases must be addressed if students with learning disabilities are to experience success (Getzel & Gugerty, 1996).

Conversely, students with disabilities may enroll in college because of pressure from parents due to the prestige associated with a college degree (Levinson, 1998). Students may find themselves in programs that do not meet their occupational aspirations, since the decision to attend college does not often consider the student's career goals. A comprehensive transition plan can ensure this does not happen (Levinson, 1998). In addition to the pressures faced by students from parents, teachers and counselors, students who choose to enter university programs may have a difficult time gaining admission because of strict testing requirements (Pagels, 1998).

Once a student has enrolled in post-secondary education he or she faces a number of obstacles. First, learning disability has been referred to as a "hidden disability" since it is not physically evident or noticeable in general contact with the student (Getzel & Gugerty, 1996). This makes it difficult for others to understand and except the needs of students with learning disabilities as readily as the needs of students with more obvious disabilities (e.g. someone who is blind). Students with learning disabilities also often deny their learning problems, wanting to remove themselves form the "special education label" they experienced in elementary and secondary school. Unfortunately, they may not seek accommodations in college until after they

have experienced failure.

Other problems faced by students with learning disabilities come from the differences between secondary and post-secondary education. Less student teacher contact and larger class sizes occur in the university setting (Lerner, 1997). Also, college courses usually require long-range assignments and evaluations, in contrast to the short-term assignment goals and evaluation experienced in high school. Students also have more unstructured time to manage and experience the loss of their support network of family and friends. While all students in college experience these new learning conditions, students with learning disabilities are at a greater risk of failure due to their inherent learning difficulties (Lerner, 1997). Their ability to self-assess abilities, deficits, interest and values is often impaired, and decision making is often a difficult and problematic process (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). Students need assistance in making appropriate career decisions and in determining what specific accommodations are needed. One of the most important skills students with learning disabilities must acquire is self-advocacy (Getzel & Gugerty, 1996; Lerner, 1997; Levinson & Ohler, 1998). They must learn how to communicate their strengths and weaknesses to professors to receive appropriate accommodations.

Even though the percentage of students with disabilities who pursue post-secondary education has increased, evidence suggests that many of these students experience difficulty staying in and completing post-secondary programs (Bursuck &Rose, 1992). A survey of 911 students with learning disabilities one year after graduation from high school found that 50% had participated in some type of post-secondary education, but only 6.5% were still enrolled at the time of data collection (Sitlington & Frank, 1990). Those students with learning disabilities who do finish their programs take considerably longer to do so than other students (Bruck, 1987).

To serve this population, many universities and community colleges have developed programs geared toward assessment, outreach and participant training, with identification of students being one of the greatest difficulties (Gajar, 1992). A majority of the referrals received by post-secondary programs that serve disabled students are from parents or self-referral prior to admission, but a large proportion of students are identified after difficulties have been experienced in the college curriculum (Gajar, 1992). Clearly, there is a need to prepare students for the transition from high school to post-secondary education to enable them to advocate for themselves and seek out needed services.

Current State of Transition Services

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 101-476), transition services are defined as follows:

> a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990, PL 101-476, Section 602(a) [20 USC 1401(a)]

This legislation stemmed partly from a document which highlighted the importance of providing a solid foundation for student with disabilities as they make the transition from the security of the public system to the opportunities and risks of adult life (Will, 1986). Successful transition requires a sound preparation in high school before the student enters the adult world of higher education and/or employment (Will, 1986).

Legislation in 1990's has improved the provision of transition services to students with

disabilities. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1990 (PL 101-476) and 1997 (PL 105-17) specify that beginning when a student is 14, and annually thereafter, the IEP must contain a statement indicating the transition needs of the student and the plan with which these needs will be met. In New York, this assessment of vocational and post-secondary needs must begin to be addressed at age 12. Once a student has determined that he or she is capable of and interested in pursuing post-secondary education, the transition plan must contain components that will ensure that the current course of study is best preparing the student for his or her future goals.

Most efforts to improve the transition of students with disabilities to the adult world have focused on students with severe disabilities (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). The skills targeted are those needed for post-secondary employment, not the transition to higher education. Students with learning disabilities, despite the fact that they constitute the largest proportion of student with disabilities in public schools, have not received the same degree of attention in their transition planning as more severely disabled students. Students with learning disabilities enrolled in post-secondary institutions receive even less attention (Levinson & Ohler, 1998). There is little research available which has evaluated the effectiveness of transition services for this population. In order to determine the essential elements of an appropriate transition plan for students considering post-secondary education, the needs of students with learning disabilities enrolled in college must first be understood and then integrated into the transition plan (Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

Best Practices for Transition Services

To make the transition from high school to post-secondary education as smooth and productive as possible, professionals should look at the predictors of success among college-

bound students with learning disabilities. Levinson and Ohler (1998) found that the following will aid in success in college: average intelligence, completion of an academically oriented curriculum, success in English classes, a grade point average of 2.5 or above, motivation and persistence, well developed study skills and strategies, and well developed social and interpersonal skills.

Summary

Since the development of legislation mandating the provision of transition services to students with disabilities, little research has assessed its impact on students with learning disabilities who pursue secondary education. To provide the best services possible to these students, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of transition plans and to determine how well the needs of students with learning disabilities are met. The purpose of this study was to identify the strengths and areas of need the transition plans of high school students with disabilities entering universities and community colleges in New York State.

Based on a review of the literature and discussion with local transition experts and professionals at the university level who work with learning disabled students, it was of interest to explore the teaching of advocacy skills to students with learning disabilities. How well secondary schools teach career decision-making skills to students with learning disabilities was also investigated. Finally, the extent to which students with learning disabilities have a proper understanding of their disability, of the differences in their rights under IDEA and ADA and how this effects the provision of services at the post-secondary level was of interest. Since so little research has been conducted in this area, the results provide a preliminary quantitative appraisal of the transition services provided to students who pursue post-secondary education in New York State.

Method

Materials

A survey was developed through a review of the literature and discussions with professionals who coordinate transition services at the high school level and work with students with disabilities at the secondary level (see Appendix for a copy of the survey.) The first section of the survey asked for demographic information including: enrollment size of the respondent's college or university, whether it was a public, private, or religiously affiliated institution, the types of degrees granted, number of students with learning disabilities (LD) served at the college, the staff/student ratio (number of students with disabilities to staff), and whether there was a cost for services. Respondents were also asked to list the types of services available to students with disabilities.

The second section examined respondent's satisfaction with transition services provided during high school for the students with learning disabilities enrolled at their college or university. The section consisted of seven statements, each relating to a different component of quality transition planning (see Appendix for specific questions.) Respondents rated each statement on a five point Likert scale, with 1 meaning they completely disagreed with the statement and 5 meaning they completely agreed with the statement. For all questions except number 2, a higher rating indicated greater satisfaction, a lower number less satisfaction. The second question was reversed coded during analysis. An overall satisfaction score was computed for each subject by averaging the scores for each question. This score was then averaged to determine an overall satisfaction score for the entire sample. An overall rating for each question was also computed.

The final section of the survey contained three open-ended questions. The first asked for

an estimate of the success rate of the students with learning disabilities. The second question asked what the respondent thought were three things schools could do better to prepare students with learning disabilities for college. Lastly, the respondents were given space to comment on any areas the survey failed to address. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Respondents were also provided with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and encouraged to request a copy of the results.

Participants

Surveys were mailed to directors of program services for students with disabilities at 174 universities and colleges in New York State. The institutions of higher learning included public, private, and religiously affiliated colleges and universities, community colleges, and technical and business institutes. The names and addresses of directors were identified through a directory available on-line of all college and university programs in New York for students with disabilities. Seventy-four surveys were returned, a 41percent return rate. Participants were informed that participation in the survey was voluntary and that all responses would be considered confidential. Descriptive information on the 74 participants are provided in Table 1.

Respondents were asked to categorize their college or university by type. Public colleges made up 50.7%, private colleges 41.1% and religiously affiliated 8.2%. Respondents were also asked to report the types of degrees offered by their college or university. Of all respondents, 56.9% of colleges or universities offered Associates degrees, while 43.1% did not. No significant difference between colleges offering Associates degrees and those that did not in the percentage of enrolled students who have learning disabilities was found (F (1, 68) = .14, p > .10).

Procedure

Participants received the survey by mail along with a letter outlining the importance of the study and the voluntary nature of participation. A form was included which the respondents could return with their name and address if they were interested in receiving the results of the study. Respondents completed and returned the survey to the investigator using postage paid envelopes. The first mailing resulted in a return of 54 surveys (return rate of 31%). A second mailing resulted in an additional 20 returned surveys (for a total return rate of 41%). Each survey was number coded.

Results

Respondents' overall satisfaction with the transition services provided for students with learning disabilities enrolled at their college was computed. The average score for each statement on the Likert scale was computed for each respondent (5 being the most satisfaction, 1 the lowest). The overall score for all respondents was then averaged. The overall satisfaction score was 2.8 (SD=0.61). To determine the strengths and weakness of transition services currently provided, the mean score for each statement was also computed. A score higher than three was considered a relative strength for current transition services and a score of less than three a relative weakness.

Respondents agreed most with the statement, "Most students seeking out our services have had a current assessment (within past three years) conducted by their high school prior to enrollment" (M=3.45, SD=1.24). Respondents also agreed that students are prepared to enroll in programs in which they have a good chance of success (M=3.25, SD=0.76).

Respondents were least satisfied with the advocacy skills of students with learning disabilities (M=2.18, SD=0.92). Respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with how well high

school staff informed students of the services available at the college level for students with disabilities (M=2.90, SD=0.96) and with services available through VESID (M=2.51, SD=1.34). Respondents were also dissatisfied with the documentation they receive from high schools on specific accommodations needed for students enrolled in their institutions (M=2.86, SD=1.29). Also, many respondents believed that there are a large number of students with learning disabilities who do not seek out assistance (M=2.39, SD=1.12).

In addition to the Likert scale data, respondents provided suggestions for ways high schools could better prepare students with learning disabilities for college. Table 2 lists the nine most frequent responses. The table includes the percentage of respondents that identified that response as an area of need. Other methods to improve transition services identified by only a few respondents include: training of staff and faculty on transition skills, encouraging students to meet with support services at the college before attending, helping students get financial supports to minimize external stressors, and teaching stress management skills.

Respondents provided a listing of the services available at their college for students with disabilities. Of the 74 respondents, only 4 charged a fee for their services, primarily for private tutoring services. The following is a summary of services provided and the percentage of colleges that offer them: 76.4% offer note takers and provide extended time on tests, 66.7% provide people to read tests to students, 63.9% offer alternative testing sites and books on tape, 58.9% provide tutors, 43 % offer advocacy for students between students and faculty, 41.7% provided individual counseling for students, 30.6% provide scribes, 29.2% have computer labs designated specifically for students with disabilities, provide seminars to teach study skills and college survival skills, and 15.3% offer pre-registration for classes. These percentages are based on responses to an open-ended question "What types of services are available to your students."

It is possible that if a list of services had been provided and respondents asked to check which ones they offered, there may have been higher percentages for each service.

Lastly, respondents were asked to provide graduation rates for students with learning disabilities at their college. Only 25 respondents were able to provide that information. The graduation rate was estimated to be 73.0% (SD=21.0). The graduation rate ranged from 10% to 100% depending on the college or university.

Discussion

The results of this survey suggest that there is some dissatisfaction among college professionals with the transition services provided to students with learning disabilities that pursue post-secondary education. Those who work with these students are most concerned with the self-advocacy skills of students. High schools are not producing students who have enough knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses and specific accommodation needs. High school transition teams should examine how well they prepare students to seek out the accommodations needed to properly compensate for their disability. For example, one need that was identified by respondents was the improvement of students' understanding of their disability. Doing so would help students explain to professors why they may need extended time on tests or other testing accommodations. In addition, self-advocacy requires that the student be independent. This was also identified as an area of need in current transition planning. Respondents noted that many students who come to college have relied too heavily on their parents and special education teachers. These students are dependent on others and then flounder when they enter college. They must take responsibility for their own educational sevices. Students and parents need to understand how their roles as advocates change due to changes in laws governing students with disabilities (IDEA vs. ADA) once the student enters college. This was identified as a weakness

in current transition planning.

Improved career decision-making skills was identified by only 8% of the respondents as an area of needed improvement in transition planning. On average, it was perceived as an area of strength. There are a number of explanations for this. It is possible that students are choosing degree programs that are appropriate for their goals and skills. They are being adequately prepared through transition services such as: job shadowing, school-to-work programs and other career planning programs. Another explanation is that respondents found other needs more important that career planning when choosing three suggestions for improvement. Even though career planning was a measured strength, it still received a relatively low rating on the Likert scale. If high schools were doing an excellent job of preparing students for appropriate programs, overall satisfaction would have been higher.

Respondents were most satisfied with the assessment of students with learning disabilities prior to enrollment in college. Specifically, they agreed that high schools provided an assessment within three years of high school graduation. Contrary to this finding, 13.9% of respondents stated that high schools should improve the *quality* of assessments and includes adequate documentation for specific accommodations. It appears that schools may be conducting assessments within the last three years of high school, but that they are not thorough and do not meet the requirements for prevision of accommodations and services at the post-secondary level.

This study is a preliminary assessment of transition services. It is clear that self-advocacy skills stand out as a major need of LD students who enroll in college. Future research should focus on how high schools can best improve students' independence and their understanding of their disability, strengths and weaknesses. Strengthened academic programming for students

with learning disabilities who plan to go onto college (including more math classes) will also improve student success in college. Specifically, adequate reading and writing skills (modified with the proper accommodations when needed and justified) are essential for success in college for students with learning disabilities. As the revised New York State Regents requirements begin to affect students with learning disabilities, these higher academic standards will become a mandatory component of graduation requirements. It will be interesting to see if these changes improve the college readiness of students with learning disabilities.

This study did not attempt to explain why high school transition plans in general are not adequately preparing students with learning disabilities for college. One explanation is that teachers and staff are not aware of the specific needs of these students. They also may not understand the difference between the definition of disabilities under education law and civil rights laws. If this is the case, staff training is essential. Training should focus on specific strategies that teachers and staff can use to teach self-advocacy skills and should include explanation of the laws which impact students with disabilities. School psychologists and other members of the multi-disciplinary team need to evaluate the quality of assessments and adequacy of documentation for college/university level accommodations. Parents and students should be considered essential members of IEP teams. They should also be encouraged to seek out college personnel to understand what is expected of students and what specific services are available at the college level.

Finally, a number of respondents also want improved communication between high school staff and service providers at the college level. Sharing the needs and concerns of staff at both levels will improve the quality of transition services provided to high school students with learning disabilities. Building the bridge between the safe and sheltered secondary special

education environment and the demanding college environment should be the goal of every transition team that serves students with learning disabilities. The results of this study give direction to those of us involved in this process.

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Table 1

Demographic Information of Respondents

	Type of College			
	Public	Private	Religious	Total
Enrollment				
M	6,465	5,331	4,238	5,661
SD	5,203	7,998	6,302	6,741
Student/Staff Ratio[a]				
M	93	67	22	73
SD	63	81	13	73
Students with Disabilities[b]				
M	3.1	3.6	3.0	3.4
SD	2.3	2.5	1.8	2.3

[a]The values represent mean number of students with disabilities receiving special services per one staff member. [b]The values represent the mean percentages of students with disabilities enrolled at the college out of the total enrollment.

Table 2

Perceived Needs of Current Transition Services

Description	Percentage[a]
Improve students' self-advocacy skills	66.7
Increase students' understanding of their disability and their specific needs	38.9
Improve students' study skills before college	31.9
Develop independent learners – this includes encouraging teachers to limit student dependence on them and encouraging parents to "let go" and let their children advocate for themselves	24.3
Ensure that students have adequate reading and writing skills	18.1
Educate students and parents about laws (difference between IDEA and ADA)	18.1
Help parents and students have realistic expectations of what student will be able to accomplish in college	18.1
Provide quality assessment prior to enrollment in college (includes adequate documentation of accommodations needed)	13.9
Teach students time management skills	12.9
Utilize more assistive technology in high school	11.1
Encourage students to take higher level high school classes, including mathematics	8.6
Provide career orientation for students	8.3

Note. Respondents were asked to list three ways high schools could improve transition services for students with learning disabilities who enroll in post-secondary education.

[a]The values represent the percentages of respondents that reported each improvement.